

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope this email finds you well and that you are looking forward to the summer period whilst your son is on holiday. A restful break, filled with enjoyment and time to recharge batteries is essential to prepare for the beginning of Year 11 and GCSE examinations.

You should have recently received your son's IAR Data in which he achieved below 28 of the 52 required points to enter Sixth Form. This leaves him in a very precarious position, requiring him to change four or more of his subjects to a level 6 within the next year. As we analyse data from previous years, this leaves him with a very real chance of not making the Sixth Form entry requirements should we not see a major change in his study habits.

Whilst this is not an impossibility, it requires some immediate attention as he has not yet mastered the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil his potential when we reach the examinations next year. His report should lay clear the subjects he needs to focus on if he is to return to Sixth Form and I hope this, along with feedback on his Year 10 exams by his teachers, makes him clear on areas he needs to improve. I also hope you've had the opportunity to sit down with him and discuss his report and look at ways to support him through his GCSE year, which can prove to be stressful for many of our young people.

Having this conversation at the start of the holiday is vital so your son understands this timing is essential to allow him enough time to implement change to his study habits, allowing him to meet the entry criteria. If his current performance was replicated at the end of next year, he would not be eligible for a place in Sixth Form, something we all hope to avoid. Having these conversations next year would be less effective in changing the outcomes at GCSE. On top of this, with six weeks off it can be easy to lose some of the hard-earned knowledge that has been acquired throughout this term, leaving him further adrift of the 52 points.

I would insist, for his benefit, that your son spends some time working on his knowledge and skills over the summer in preparation for the challenges of Year 11, particularly in the subjects he is finding more difficult. This continued revision throughout the break is essential to keep him progressing rather than finding himself on the back foot at the start of his final GCSE year. Many successful students construct a revision timetable with the help of their parents, allowing for some scheduled revision time within the holiday, as of course a break is also needed from the rigorous demands of school. Whilst I'm not suggesting they spend the whole summer working, dedicated time recapping past material will provide great benefit at the beginning of Year 11. Fortunately for our young people, technology has advanced so far which can actually make this process quite enjoyable compared to the days of old, which brings me to my next point around revision resources the school provides.

Online Resources

Effective learning comes in three parts, firstly covering or revising material and secondly, testing the understanding of the content covered and finally revisiting this at a later date. It is for this reason we have



purchased subscriptions to two online resources to help our students attain highly at GCSE. It's vital students understand the sections of the process and the below is a guide to how these resources should be used, along with how to gain access.

GCSEPod

The best use of this software is for the learning and revision stage. Every GCSE subject is included, broken down into the smaller topics or 'pods' as per the specifications given by the exam boards. Each of these topics is then covered with instructional videos and written resources designed to teach the learner the content and skills necessary for the exam. Students should spend time going through each GCSE 'Pod' for each subject, recapping material they've covered in class. In order to access GCSEPod, follow the instructions below:

- Visit www.gcsepod.com and hit login in the top right corner
- On the left of the next page it says 'New to GCSEPod?', click 'Get Started' underneath
- Click 'Student' and fill in the details using your full name as registered with the school
- Start accessing the content!

Seneca Premium

This software is the most powerful assessment tool we have found, containing quizzes and rapid-fire testing on almost every facet of the GCSE curricula. Our previous students have always highly recommended this software so we have enabled access to the premium service for every child to help with their revision. Once a student has started using this software, they can then use it to go back after a certain period and revisit the content studied to ensure they remember it. If they find they are struggling, they should revert to GCSEPod for further instructional help. In order to access Seneca Premium, follow the instructions below:

- Visit www.senecalearning.com and hit 'Sign Up' in the top right corner
- Click 'Login with Microsoft' and use your school email address and password
- Start accessing the content!

If your son spends some time using these resources over summer, I'm confident that come the first data collection in the new term, he will see the benefit and it will stand him in good stead for the rest of Year 11. We will be working specifically on revision techniques during classes and tutor times, alongside some Evening Workshop provision for both students and parents to give you the tools to succeed next year. If he is still finding things difficult, we shall also look at extra, tailored support available to him.

Uniform

The only other point I would like to mention is uniform and, in particular, school shoes. Many of our students will purchase new shoes ahead of the new term which should conform to our school uniform code of 'plain black formal shoes'. Many retailers across the country are trying to sell black trainers under the guise of school shoes, with popular brands including Nike and Adidas designing shoes just for this purpose. These do not conform to our uniform regulations so please do not purchase them over the summer as they will not be permitted next term. I will also take this opportunity to remind our students that our school policy is that of no facial hair, and no hoodies or sweaters other than a plain black school jumper. My final reminder is that piercings are not to be worn within school at Key Stage 4.

Finally, I wish you and your sons the very best summer imaginable, and I look forward to starting again in September for a successful Year 11.

Yours sincerely,



Lewis Baines
Director of Key Stage 4
Southend High School for Boys